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ABSTRACT

A service delivery model that could unite general and special education is cooperative teaching. Cooperative teaching is an educational approach in which general and special educators work in coactive and coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogenous groups in educationally integrated settings. There is considerable research evidence which suggests that this kind of approach provides benefits in terms of academic achievement and positive self-concept to both regular and special education students. In addition, benefits can accrue to both the special education and the regular education teacher in the form of improved practice, relief from stressful conditions, and collegial interaction. Twenty references are appended. (IAH)

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EFFECTS OF COOPERATIVE TEACHING ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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In 1975 Public Law 94-142, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act was enacted. According to Gearhaert and Weishahn (1980) this law guarantees a free, appropriate education to handicapped children and youth. The purpose of the law was to assure that the rights of the handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected. The law was designed to assist states and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped children. It was also designed to assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate the handicapped children. There are three major components of PL 94-142. One is that the handicapped child and parents have rights to due process of law. The second component is that the child gets an individualized education program. The third major provision to PL 94-142 is that the handicapped child is to have an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. This emphasizes the importance of learning as normal an environment as possible. There are two major points that are emphasized in the least restrictive environment provision. One is that children should be removed from the mainstream of school life only if it is not possible for them to make it in regular classes. The second point is that when a child is in a separate program, every effort should be made to provide experiences for give-and-take with non-handicapped peers. There are many advantages to the least restrictive environment provision of PL 94-142.

There are advantages to the teachers, non-handicapped students and handicapped students in regards to the least restrictive environment. The advantages to the teachers is that both the regular and special educators begin to assume cooperative teaching roles. Each discipline has unique skills and competencies that must be shared. Both disciplines seek insight and specific suggestions about how to best meet the needs of all students. The least restrictive environment gives the teachers challenges to grow professionally and personally. There are many advantages to the non-handicapped student. According to Johnson and Johnson (1986) found that handicapped and non-handicapped students achieved more in cooperative learning that in competitive or individualistic learning situations. This is true for all age groups, ability level, subject ages and learning tasks. Each student has a great deal to offer others and by teaching students to teach others, all will be advantaged. All students need to be exposed to differences in individuals. This allows the students to gain respect for and appreciate human differences. Students must be exposed to racial, ethnic, intellectual and psychological differences if they are going to reach their full personal potentials. There are many advantages to the handicapped child as well. One advantage is that gives them an opportunity to reach their maximum potential. This allows them to become contributing members of society. They are

given an equal educational opportunity, which is the best way to prepare them to live as successful adults in an integrated society.

Since the enactment of PL94-142 there have been many changes in the public school system. According to Vaughn and Bos (1987) many school are functioning as two separate educational systems. The first educational system is the regular educational system which is organized at grade levels. The regular education systems main responsibility is to teach all students. The K-12 system is not designed to teach basic skills to inefficient learners. The second educational system is composed of specialized assistance programs designed to serve students with handicaps. In 1985 there were at least 42 federal programs targeted specifically for handicapped individuals. The budget for these programs exceeded 36 billion dollars. These specialized assistance programs represent a fragmented approach to many different, but interrelated problems. In view of these programs some have benefitted the students, while others have not. Some students with learning problems have not been served because the program did not meet the educational needs of all students with learning problems. The educational system should not contain so many diverse parts and fail to meet the needs of students who need special help.

Since the enactment of PL 94-142 there have been many changes in the school age population receiving special help. According to Vaughn and Bos (1986) nationally the percentage of handicapped students served as learning disabled varies from 26% to 46% of the handicapped population across the 50 states. Edgar and Hayden (1984-1985) found that the number if individuals in all handicapping conditions has increased 16% since 1976-77, but that the learning disabled has increased 119%. According to Reynolds, Wang and Walberg (1987) state that every indicator shows the number and proportion of children having "special needs" are rising and will continue to rise over at least the next several years. During the 1984-1985 school year, of the 42 million young people in public schools, at least 42 million young people in public schools, at least 4% were in special education programs for the learning disabled according to PL 94-142. There is a problem with PL 94-142 because there is another 10-20% of the school population who are not in special education, but who have mild or moderate learning problems that interfere with their education progress. Although well intentioned, the pull out program has failed in many instances to meet the educational needs of all students with learning problems. Overall there are at least 20-30% of the school age population who are having difficulty progressing in our schools because of learning problems.

The students are separated by the educational system. In the present educational system the students are grouped into normal and exceptional categories. The idea that some students are distinctly different from the normal population of students has been justified on the basis that some students deviate to an extreme from the norm or average on one or more characteristics. All students differ along continuums of intellectual, physical and psychological characteristics. If each student can be viewed as an individual, particular strengths could be capitalized upon and particular handicaps could be minimized.

In the present educational system categorization is encouraged because of the dual system it is necessary to determine who belong in which system. According to Stainback and Stainback (1984) this costs a great deal of time, money and effort to try to determine who is regular and who is special and what type or category of exceptionality each student fits. Reynolds, Wang and Walberg (1987) found the categories have been ill defined and unreliable. The boundaries have shifted so markedly in response to legal, economic, and political forces to make diagnosis largely meaningless and inconsistent. Classification is often done unreliably, it stereotypes students, and is of little instructional value. This practice has resulted in an over referral rate to special education of many students who do not meet state or federal guidelines for special education

eligibility (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989). All human beings in need of assistance should be entitled to help. This should not be dependent upon whether or not they fall within a certain category. If teachers provide assistance only to special categories of people this results in the multiplication of categories and the assigning of people to these groups, instead of focusing on their circumstances and needs.There are about half the students who are experiencing difficulty and do not meet the eligibility criteria for classification as handicapped. These students typically are described as having poor work habits; social, conduct, and behavior problems; low self-esteem; slow learning rates; poor motivation; language problems; experiential deprivation; or a mismatch between the curriculum and the individuals learning style (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989). According to Chalfant, Reynolds, Wang and Walberg (1987) many districts have no alternative program for these students and their teachers. Special education has contributed to an increasing disjointedness in school programs and an inability to meet the needs of new problems such as child depression and grief, drug use, teenage pregnancy, poor academic motivation, and school absence.

Many students do not benefit from the current special education system. The students at the secondary level frequently feel jerked around by the educational system (Davis, 1989). These students either become benefactors or victims of

philosophical debate, litigation and legislative mandates that are subsequently transformed into educational policies and practices. These students often feel they are not listened to or their opinions truly valued. One study by Zigmond, Levin and Laurie (1985) found that most learning disabled students could cope with most of mainstream instruction. In their study only 20% of the learning disabled students were failing more courses than they were passing. Overall passing grades were obtained in approximately 75% of courses and more than 30% of students were passing everything. It is reinforcing for a student to receive a passing grade. This makes the student more optimistic about school and this optimism tends to lead the student to more opportunities for learning (c.f. Lee, McDonnel as cited in Zigmond, Levin, & Laurie 1985).

In the current educational system the instructional methods differ as to one set for special students and another set for use with regular students. According to Stainback and Stainback (1984) methods need to be tailored to individual characteristics and needs, but the methods do not need to separated into those applicable only for special students or only for regular students. The assumption is arising that there are two psychologies of learning, one for special people and one for regular people. According to Wiederholt and Chamberlain (1989) there is a general lack of curriculum coordination between

learning disability and regular education programs. Not only do special and regular educators vary, but Lovitt (1975a & 1975b) found resource teachers vary markedly in their use of instructional practices. Some resource teachers apply rigorous educational technology such as applied behavioral analysis and other teachers simply provide tutoring on the general education curriculum. According to Zigmond, Levin and Laurie (1985) think to effectively mainstream students secondary school teachers need to learn how to make their instruction motivating, attractive, and meaningful so as to entice students to come, since once there students seem to have a good chance of having a successful experience. Stainback and Stainback (1984) state the instructional needs of students would support the merger of the two systems into a comprehensive, unified system designed to meet the unique needs of every student.

In the current education system the resource teacher is not expected or encouraged to deal with regular class teacher. If any communication does take place between the resource and regular education teachers it is a general discussion about students who attend the resource room. According to Stainback and Stainback (1984) educators outside of special education are often perceived as either indifferent to or even prejudiced against, the needs of children considered handicapped. The regular educators are often lazy, scared, and do not understand

many things about the handicapped. The special educators often feel they have to battle against the regular educators. These factions that occur within the education system do not allow for the full potential of education to students. According to an anonymous questionnaire administered by Zigmond, Levin and Laurie (1985) stated that high school teachers recognized learning disabled students as underachievers and expected them to be a burden. Once the students were in the classroom the teachers confirmed the fact that they were underachievers, but they were not a burden because the teachers did not plan different instruction for these students. Two large scale investigations indicated that in the 1980's there is a promainstreaming and pronormalization among many regular educators (c.f. Albrecht, Knoff as cited in Stainback & Stainback, 1985). There can be a change of attitude and skill in dealing with the handicap through inservices.

There are many problems with the current resource program for the handicapped, one effort should be to create mainstream situations that are strong and able to serve children with diverse needs. According to Reynolds (1989) thinks that the special education resources should be redeployed to the mainstream to help do this job. This would allow the student to be in a least restrictive environment and also have the needed help and support of a special educator. The special educator

would be able to work with the parents and offer individualized, highly intensive instruction to students who have not been progressing well in school. All students would be able to receive help from the special educator. There would be more collaboration between the special and regular classroom teacher. To be able to make this program work research needs to be done to repair and refine past programs (Reynolds, 1989).

In a study viewing whether or not regular education classes are equipped to accommodate students with learning disabilities, Baker and Zigmond (1990) found that changes need to occur in regular education classes. They found that the teachers were too routine and all instruction was directed towards the whole class or large groups. The teachers did not account for individual difference. THese teachers also did not spend much time actually teaching and most of the time was for instructional activities. Changes need to occur in the mainstream instruction for the regular education initiative to work. The teachers need to increase the time spent actually teaching. The teachers also need to account for individual differences and be able to vary instructional activities to account for those individual differences. With the team of special educators and regular educators many of these problems would be solved.

A study looked at the effects of cooperative and individualistic instruction on the achievement of handicapped,

regular, and gifted students (Smith,Johnson & Johnson, 1982). The results indicate that cooperative learning experiences promoted higher achievement, greater retention, more positive attitudes among students, and higher self-esteem than did individualistic learning experiences. Cooperative learning experiences promoted peer relationships characterized by encouraging and supporting academic learning and personally accepting, caring about and liking each other. Handicapped students felt more accepted and supported when they were part of a heterogenous cooperative learning group. The normal and gifted students also felt more support and caring from their peers.

Zigmond and Baker (1990) set out to study the mainstream experiences for elementary school learning disabled students. They found that students with learning disabilities adjusted well to a less individualized and more demanding mainstream program. These students came to school regularly, did not present serious behavior problems and spent much of reading class and more of math class on task as they had in special education. The students were assigned more opportunities to work with text material, rather than workbooks in reading and spent significantly more reading time in teacher directed lessons. However, the students did not make significant progress in reading or math. The authors suggest that students will not succeed in the mainstream if the teachers continue as they have

in the past.

A service delivery model that could unite general and special education is cooperative teaching. According to Bauwens, Hourcade and Friend (1989) cooperative teaching refers to an educational approach in which general and special educators work in coactive and coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogenous groups of students in educationally integrated settings. Both general and special teachers are simultaneously present in the general classroom, maintaining joint responsibility for specified classroom instruction that is to occur with that setting. This approach uses the unique skills each professional brings to the school. On one hand general educators are knowledgeable about curriculum and are skilled in large group management and on the other hand special educators are good at targeting special areas of difficulty within curriculum. This approach also allows for successful integration of students with mild disabilities with the special education teacher int he classroom. In this approach educators do not have the problems that occur when trying to mainstream students form the segregated special education class to the regular classroom. This way the teachers are able to adapt curriculum instruction to the individual student, instead of what usually occurs in general education where the teacher goes by the curriculum guidelines and does not account for individual differences. Another advantage

to cooperative teaching is that the students can receive needed instructional or curricular modifications early and intensively, which reduces the likelihood of the need for special education services.

There are several approaches that can be used in cooperative teaching interchangeably, but one that uses both teacher equally is team teaching. In this approach the general and special educators jointly plan and teach academic subject content to all students (Bauwens, Hourcade & Friend, 1989). At various times one teacher might assume primary responsibility for specific types of instruction or portions of the curriculum. One advantage to team teaching is that the special educator can avoid the stress and effects of burnout, which occurs from working in the unique psychological climate of segregated special education settings. This approach may enhance job satisfaction and stability. The teacher teams also facilitate collegial interactions and greater professional talk and action. The other two approaches used in cooperative teaching are complimentary instruction and supportive learning activities.

A cooperative teaching program was implemented in Badger Middle School in Wisconsin with positive results in many areas of the program (Wiedmeyer & Lehman, 1991). Four teachers were given questionnaires to obtain feedback about the program and all four teachers were in 100% agreement that this was a viable

alternative to the pull-out program. They felt the students with learning disabilities could test the waters of the mainstream without any penalty. The students could feel a part of their regular class. Parents were sent questionnaires regarding their attitudes about their students being in the new program. Parents of the learning disabled were quite positive in their comments, especially those regarding the learning and self-concepts of their children. The parent questionnaires were 95% positive regarding the cooperative teaching model. The students were given a questionnaire and they said they felt better about school and themselves. Out of the students, 92% of the comments were positive regarding the cooperative teaching model. The regular education students also benefitted because they received additional help in areas that they were low in.

Another cooperative teaching program was implemented at John Witherspoon Middle school in Princeton, New Jersey (Messersmith & Piantek, 1988). By the end of the first year most of the students had gained immensely from his experience. The students were motivated and their needs were being met. The differences between the staff members and the line between the regular and special education students was not apparent by the end of the first year. From the students point of view there were several advantages. The special education students developed a more positive self-concept. THe cooperative teaching program

facilitated better social adjustment. The students exhibited little disruptive behavior. They had the opportunity to benefit form different teaching styles and techniques. The students received all levels of support. They learned to function in an independent manner, rather than exhibiting "learned helplessness". There were some advantages form the teachers point of view as well. The teachers were able to share and exchange their expertise with each other through teaming and regularly scheduled conferences. All level of support were provided.

To see if cooperative teaching can become the main program for the educational system, more research needs to be done. As Reynolds (1991) stated researchers need to repair and refine existing programs, instead of creating new programs. As the research has shown there are many more advantages to the cooperative teaching program than disadvantages, although this program is still is a beginning phase. Much research has been done showing the effects of cooperative teaching on elementary and middle school students. What needs to be researched is the educational achievement of cooperative teaching on high school students. This will help complete the overall picture of cooperative teaching on all grade levels.

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